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# U.S. Stresses Political Aspect of Vietnam War

Propaganda Among Natives Has Become Top Priority Item Under Gen. Taylor

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WASHINGTON — The emphasis in official thinking on the Vietnamese war has shifted from stressing the purely military aspects to the basically political nature of the conflict.

Because of this, propaganda among the Vietnamese people has become a top priority item under the new ambassadorial regime of Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor in Saigon.

Similarly, but on a smaller scale, the information effort among the American people has been upgraded.

The Defense Department has quietly started a program to take small groups of U.S. correspondents to Vietnam to see first hand the nature of the conflict.

The concern often expressed by officers who have served in Vietnam, is that Americans don't understand what kind of a war is fought there.

## Battles Over-Emphasized

The problem, as they see it, is that too often in the past official statements and news reports from Vietnam have over-emphasized the battles, using conventional military terms.

This, according to the now popular line of thought, has generated the impression that the Vietnam fighting is like the Korean war.

The battle front in South Vietnam is not an ugly wound across the face of the country as it was in Korea, however. It is instead hundreds of malignant boils which erupt suddenly in painful and sometimes inaccessible spots all over the body of the nation.

In the week ended July 18, 900 new such boils were reported.

## Leaflets, Assassins

The boils—Viet Cong incidents—ranged from anti-aircraft fire directed from otherwise quiet paddy fields to the spreading of propaganda leaflets and the assassination of local leaders.

There is not one front in South Vietnam where military strength can be concentrated, but rather thousands of fronts.

Technically there is no such thing as the Viet Cong enemy. This is a term used only by the South Vietnamese government and the United States.

There is, instead, the Front for National Liberation which includes elements other than hard-core Communists and which directs the guerrilla hands. It declared that it does not fight the Vietnamese people, but rather fights for them against government puppets and American invaders.

## Fade Away

This program is effective enough to have created the front-less war, the war of nearly a thousand incidents a week, where those who commit the incidents can fade into the villages and be assured of sanctuary.

Emphasis on the political problems of the war means higher priority for winning local loyalty.

Propaganda is one tool but to be effective, goes the thinking, there must be accomplishments worth propagandizing.

South Vietnam faces a dilemma of leadership.

From an originally small pool of talent, local leaders

rose. But those who cast their lot against communism met with savagery from Dan Vich assassination squads difficult for Americans to comprehend.

Competent estimates of the number of local leaders who have been assassinated range from 10,000 to 30,000.

In a nation of 14 million this means virtually every anti-Communist of ability has been wiped out. Those who are left are often incompetent and unwilling.

## New Training Priority

Emphasis on politics means new priority for training those men who can become competent and protecting those who can become willing.

Protection means some increase in South Vietnamese armed forces.

The emphasis on politics stresses the view that the military problem—fighting organized Viet Cong units—is secondary to the task of preventing villages from slipping through three now-familiar stages—pro-government, then neutral, then pro-Communist.

When that is done, Pentagon officials say, perhaps a military front can be created with Communist units clearly on one side, and U.S.-backed government forces on the other.